

the camera 34 and audio data of the conference participant HM1, captured by the microphone 35 are sent to the other teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn through the communication network NT. In the example structure shown in Fig. 69, the image data of the conference participant HM1, captured by the camera 34 is also sent to the attention-degree-information generating section JB1 of the signal processing device SPD1.

Audio data of conference participants HM2 to HMn, sent from the other teleconference devices TCD2 to TCDn are controlled such that individual sound images are formed in the vicinities of images of the conference participants HM2 to HMn, displayed on the screen 31, and are sent to speakers 32 and 33 disposed at the right and left of the screen 31 and emitted. With this control, the positions of images of the conference participants HM2 to HMn, displayed on the screen 31 almost match those of locations where the voices (sound) of the conference participants HM2 to HMn are heard.

In the present embodiment, the attention-degree-information generating section JB is disposed in each of the signal processing devices SPD1 to SPDn of the teleconference devices TCD1 to TCDn. An attention-degree-information generating section JB may be independently provided on the communication network NT.

In the present embodiment, as shown in Fig. 2, the

monitor devices MD2 to MDn are separated from the signal processing device SPD1. Each or one of the monitor devices MD2 to MDn can have the function of the signal processing device.

In the present embodiment, as shown in Fig. 1, the seating-order determination device GJD is independently connected to the communication network NT. Each or one of the teleconference devices TCD1 to TCDn can have the function of the seating-order determination device.

In the present embodiment, as examples for detecting a direction, the lines of sight and a face direction are separately detected. They can be detected at the same time.

In the present embodiment, one conference participant belongs to only one group at each point of time. It is also possible that a plurality of groups is defined, such as a group to which a conference participant mainly belongs and a group in which a conference participant does not give opinions but from which the conference participant wants to obtain information; each conference participant is allowed to belong to a plurality of groups; and a seating order is determined according to which group each of the conference participants at the other sides belongs to.

As described above, according to the teleconference system of the present embodiment, even when a plurality of conference participants say at the same time, it is easier

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for a conference participant to listen to a speech in a group which the conference participant belongs to, and it is also easier to see images. Therefore, the teleconference system provides each conference participant with comfort and satisfaction with information.

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